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ABSTRACT

Three environmental elements--messages, events, and perceived consequences of choices--cause varying amounts of stress on an individual and affect his capacity to deal with his environment. There is a nonmonotonic relationship between environmental pressures ("event press") and persuasibility in that the number and importance of stressing events that a person experiences affects his cognitive capacities to process and accept new ideas. People who have experienced low amounts of "event press" tend to have cognitive inertia and are less prepared to respond to persuasive communication than those who have learned to function at higher cognitive capacities. However, those who have experienced very high amounts of "event press" are not able to process persuasive communication because of exhaustion of their cognitive capacities. The development of an "Environmental Stability Scale" to provide an estimate for the amount of adjustment to "event press" required for balanced information processing and a pilot experiment to test the effects of a persuasive message on subjects of high, moderate, or low "event press" show promise in understanding these phenomena. (Research data are included.) (RN)

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PERSUASIBILITY--A RECEPTION-YIELDING PROCESS: A NONMONOTONIC THEORY OF MAN'S RECEPTION DISTORTION BEHAVIORS AS A FUNCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL FLUCTUATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study suggests a theory concerned with the impact of environmental stimulation on an individual's response to persuasive communication. This "Strain Toward Stability" theory postulates a nonmonotonic relationship between environmental press: and persuasibility. It is maintained that the number and power of stressful life events (e.g., divorce, death of a parent, traffic citations) which an individual experiences affects his "finite cognitive capacity" to process communication. Those who have experienced only small amounts of environmental stimulation tend to suffer from cognitive inertia and are not equipped to use their "finite cognitive capacity" to process and accept new ideas communicated to them. However, once the individual has learned to use his cognitive capacity he tends to see what McGuire calls a "dynamic equilibrium" of active involvement without punishing over - or understimulation. It is expected that persons in this group will be more likely to yield to persuasive communication than others. Additionally, those individuals who experience extreme amounts of environmental stimulation tend to suffer from exhaustion of their cognitive capacities (what Toffler terms "future shock") and are unable to process additional communication let alone yield to it. Thus, differing reception-distortion behaviors (dogmatism, ego-involvement, etc.) are manifested by individuals as a consequence of their differing tolerances to yield to the belief or behavioral changes implied in the persuasive communication.

The research in this study is concerned with the development of an "Environmental Stability Scale" appropriate to student populations and a preliminary pilot exploration based on one set of the theoretic predictions. The pilot experimentation provides research information requisite for later formal testing of predictions from the theory. The first hypothesis of the preliminary pilot experiment addresses the relationship between the degree of change in a subject's most acceptable position produced by a high press message, and the amount of press experienced. The remaining hypotheses address primarily the relationship between the level of event press experienced by individuals confronted with a high press message, and the degree of reception-distortion behaviors as manifested in assimilation-contrast effects.

PERSUASIBILITY--A RECEPTION-YIELDING PROCCESS: A NONMONOTONIC THEORY OF MAN'S RECEPTION DISTORTION BEHAVIORS AS A FUNCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL FLUCTUATIONS

> There must be a balance, not merely between rates of change in different sectors [of society], but between the pace of environmental change and the limited pace of human responce. For future shock grows out of the increasing lag between the two (Toffler, 1970, p.5).

Toffler's notion that extreme fluctuations in an individual's environment may have powerful mental, physical, and behavioral consequences is an intriguing thought. Though Toffler developed his future shock "theory" from a fairly speculative perspective, it stimulates serious thought for useful new directions in communication research. One new direction will be probed here. The focus of this paper is conceptual. The purpose of this paper is to suggest a new theory of responses to persuasive communication.

We note three environmental elements which press an individual's cognitive capacity to deal with perceived relationships between himself and the many persons, places, things and ideas, which flesh out his map of the world. Messages, events, and perceived consequences of choices--the three crucial environmental elements--introduce varying amounts of pressure on the individual which, in turn, results in differential amounts of stress upon an individual's cognitive capacity which, subsequently results in varying utilizations of cognitive coping mechanisms designed to manage changing environments.

For convenience, we refer to the theory developed here as "Strain Toward Stability Theory." In essence, it postulates a broad nonmonotonic relationship between environmental press and individual susceptibility to social influence. This conceptualization seems particularly relevant to communication researchers since it avoids the pitfalls of traditional assumptions about homeostasis. Instead of positing the view that man seeks a pause or state of inactivity (Heider, 1946; Newcomb, 1953; Festinger, 1957), we hold that man seeks a "dynamic equilibrium" (McGuire, 1968) or "steady state" (Bertalanffy, 1968) of stimulation. In other words, man seeks an optimal level of environmental stimulation. When an individual is either deprived or glutted by events, messages, and/or perceived consequences of choices, he will not be as responsive to social influence as he would be if his environment were more stable. When an individual finds himself deprived or glutted by his environment, he can be expected to utilize various "reception distortion"

techniques as cognitive coping mechanisms in an attempt to restore cognitive stability.

From a slightly different viewpoint, the dynamic equilibrium principle underlying this theory might be understood best from the perspective of an individual's interaction with, and orientations to persons, places, things, and ideas, which flesh out his map of the world. Man experiences a constant state of environmental change. Throughout his life man finds new persons, places, things, and ideas, which interact with and modify his existing notions of reality. Such changes result from endless contacts with messages, events, and perdeived consequences of choices. The interaction alters both private (or "internal orientations") and external (or "social orientations"). Constant reorientations are a necessary expectation since the dynamic equilibrium principle predicts that man neither wants an environment which is static nor one which is highly transient. Rather, man thrives best in an environment which is in a process of moderate growth and change.

Clearly, one of the most pervasive sources of information regarding possible new relational orientations among persons, places, things, and ideas, which compose environments is persuasive communication. Though events and perceived consequences of choices are also of concern, the potential stress from his daily exposure to messages which pour freely from televisions, radios, friends, and strangers, is central to this theory.

Since "research in speech-communication focuses on the ways in thich messages link participants during interactions (Kibler & Barker, 1969, p. 33)" this theory may be useful to communication researchers because it specifies conditions under which messages are capable of linking participants together. The theory deals with the interaction of "message press," "event press," and "consequent press," and predicts individual reactions to broad strategies of social influence. As such, Strain Toward Stability theory may contribute to the quest for theory in communication.

In order to facilitate understanding of the Strain Toward Stability theory, the theoretic bases will be stated first, followed by a report on the developeent of an instrument to measure "event press," and finally, the results of preliminary pilot experimentation will be reviewed.

THEORETIC BASES

Development of the Strain Toward Stability Theory en-

compasses: (1) discussion and definition of key constructs; (2) determination of some fundamental assumptions and limitations of the theory: (3) essential postulates of the theory presented; and (4) suggestion of the theory's role for stimulating future research and explaining communication behavior.

Discussion and Definitions of Constructs

Three major constructs are essential to understanding the theory: (1) dynamic equilibrium; (2) environmental press; and (3) cognitive coping mechanisms.

1. DYNAMIC EQUILIBRIUM

Dynamic equilibrium refers to a motivational state of striving in which the individual interacts with his environment in an attempt to avoid punishing over- or understimulation. In contrast with homeostatic theories which conceptualize man as seeking a rest or pause between upsetting stimuli, the dynamic equilibrium construct holds that man strives for a mid-range of stimulation: a mid-range quantity of variations in the desired relationships held toward persons, places, things, and ideas, in the environment. In short, the organism "strains toward stability" but does not seek inactivity (stasis) or total balance. Instead, the organism thrives within a certain stable range of change and flux. This distinction between homeostasis and dynamic equilibrium is essential: homeostatic notions argue that man strives for a state of congruence and rest; dynamic equilibrium holds that man strives for involvement and attempts to manage environmental stimulation. To view the distiction another way, if man ever achieved total balance among all relations held toward and among persons, places, things, and ideas, homeostatic theories would predict that the individual would remain in that balanced state until forced out of it. Dynamic equilibrium, on the other hand, would lead to the prediction that the "balanced" individual would go out of his way to upset the balance, rather than remain in it. Total balance, it seems from the dynamic equilibrium construct, is not a state of blissful harmony, but a state of boredom.

Individuals who have not had the opportunity to experience much change in their normal environments, tend to suffer from "cognitive inertia" (Reinard & Crawford, 1973b, esp. pp. 28-31) and do not respond favorably to even moderate amounts of environmental stimulation. However, donce the individual has learned to deal with new information and learned to appreciate novel stimuli, he tends to seek a dynamic equilibrium of activity within a stable mid-range. When the individual striving for dynamic equilibrium experiences too much stimulation, he tends to suffer form exhaustion of his cognitive capacity and is not able to process additional stimuli (such persons suffer "future shock"). When overloading occurs, all energy must be

expended to return the level of stimulation to a stable, yet dynamic, mid-range.

Though this nonmonotonic view of man's message reception behavior is somewhat novel, there are several theoretic supports for such a model. One such position is suggested by McGuire:

> There is a optimal level of influenceability for adequate adaptation to the human environment. Hence, it is implied by an adaptivity approach that there will tend to be compensatory mechanisms, such that a characteristic which tends in some ways to make an individual extremely open (or opaque) to influence will tend in other ways to have the reverse effect, resulting in a dynamic equilibrium. The pervasiveness of nonmonotonic relationships between personality and influenceability is one of the results (McGuire, 1968, pp. 1139-1140).

McGuire finds that the research of Appley & Moeller (1963) provides empirical support for the pervasive nonmonotonic relationships between personality and influenceability. In the Appley-Moeller study, the distributions of 38 personality characteristics within a derived taxonomy of high, moderate, and low conformity types were observed and a nonmonotonic relationship between conformity and personality on all but five of the variables was found. As concluded by McGuire, "Aside from the question of why it is so, there is widespread empirical evidence that personality variables do in fact tend to be nonmonotonically related to influenceability (p.1147)."

Dynamic equilibrium patterns also seem to have been noticed by other social and psychological theorists. Applebaum, et. al. (1973) for example argue that man seeks a state in which "...our beliefs, thoughts, attitudes behaviors, and social relationships are harmonious. They are consistent with each other, fitting together without stress and resisting influence from outside sources (p.159)." Hilgard and Atkinson concur that:

> Despite the importance of homeostasis and the stresses that are implied when it is upset, the normal life of the organism is not one of quiescence, but one of action. (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1967, p.54).

As suggested earlier, the implications for such dynamic equilibrium views lead to a concern with man's overall cognitive space. Dynamic equilibrium may account for a broad nonmonotonic distribution of man's capacity to engage in the attitude change process. This would hold, in principle, if it could be demonstrated that man has a finite cognitive capacity and that environmental fluctuations sap significant portions of that capacity. In other words, if individuals experiencing either extremely little or extremely large amounts of press from their environments respond negatively to the persuader's call for a proposed

"relational change"* and resort to using various cognitive defense behaviors, then it would be reasonable to conclude that the general level of environmental stimulation is a crucial construct interacting with message reception and yielding.

In perspective, dynamic equilibrium can be seen as a predominant condition of human activity and communication interaction behavior. A useful summary of the behavioral significance of dynamic equilibrium is provided by McGuire who observes:

> In the case of susceptibility to social influence (as for many other behavioral dimensions, if we are to accept Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics) there seems to be a golden middle range. The person should be open, but not too open, to outside influence if he is to thrive in the natural environment (1968, p. 1171).

2. ENVIRONMENTAL PRESS

Environmental Press serves as a mediating factor between the individual's cognitive capacity and his reception-yielding behaviors. Terms such as "cognitive mechanisms," "role playing," or "mental rehearsal," may be best understood following a discussion of environmental press. Clinical psychologists in the TAT tradition (Murray, 1943; Sanford, 1943) coined the term "environmental press" to indicate "an environmental force, a patterned meaningful whole, which affects or might affect the subject in a certain manner (Sanford, 1943, p. 127)." A more useful definition of environmental press includes:

> (1) situations he has actually encountered, or (2) situations which in reveries or dreams he has imagined encountering, out of hope or fear, or (3) the momentary situation (press) of the examiner and the task as he perceives it, and/or (4) situations he expects to encounter, would like to encounter, or dreads encountering. Roughly the press may be interpreted as the subject's view of his world, the impressions he is likely to project into his interpretations of an existing situation and into his anticipations of future situations (Murray, 1943, p. 14).

To sharpen these four distinctions somewhat one might imagine examples of each form. First, an individual who experiences the receipt of a traffic ticket might find himself readjusting his orientations to various persons, places, things, and/or ideas in his environment. He may create new orientations or change existing ones. He might anticipate a quarrel with his wife, a postponed vacation, a growing disgust with his car, or a need to reconsider purchasing tickets to the policemen's ball. Making these cognitive readjustments to a suddenly altered environment requires considerable energy and occupies considerable space in an individual's total cognitive capacity. Second, the press caused by day-dreaming is well-known among frustrated educators as a factor affecting information processing and retention. Although it

* We use the term "relational change" to encompass a communicator's attempt to alter the relationships between an individual and the persons, places, things, and ideas which interact to comprise his map of the world. A communicator may attempt to elicit a relational change by trying to change existing relationships (create dissonance) or by trying to create new relationships (inform).

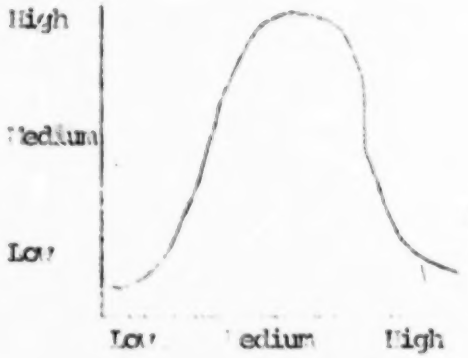
is difficult to account for the effects of such activity, we grant that it has potential consequences for yielding to persuasive communication. Third, the impact of a momentary situation or message which demands the full attention of a subject is a major area of interest to behavioral scientists. The concern of researchers with demand characteristics, experimenter bias, and generalizability provides a great deal of information regarding the impact of this form of press on experimental subjects. Fourth, the effects of an expected encounter with a novel situation clearly is a crucial element of the environmental press construct from the perspective of communication researchers. Most messages which create or change relationships between persons, places, things, and/or ideas, in the individual's environment, can be conceived as a means of compelling the receiver to mentally encounter a rewarding or punishing situations. For example, in experimentation on attitude change in which an attempt is made to alter subjects' existing relationships to the University (e.g., suggesting to underclassmen that, "University students be restricted to upper division students only"), the researcher opts to make the subjects mentally rehearse their perception of the rewards and/or punishments inherent in the proposed altered environments.

As mentioned earlier, environmental press, whatever its source (message, event, or perceived consequent), is crucial to understanding man as communicator because it is assumed that individuals have finite cognitive capacities. Man cannot think or respond to all things at all times. From a broad, generalized perspective, at least three major empirical and theoretical efforts seem to support the proposition that man has a finite cognitive capacity for processing message stimuli. Schroeder, Driver and Steufert, (1967) Berlyne, (1965) and Lanzetta's (1967) formulations seem to suggest the existence of a "stimulus deprivation" (low environmental press) phenomenon and "stimulus glut" (high environmental press) phenomenon which inhibits the human organism from optimum performance in a variety of situations. The three notions may be illustrated by Figure I below:

(1) Information Processing (Schroeder, et al. 1967)

(2) Search for Alternatives (Berlyne, 1965)

(3) Conceptual Complexity (Lanzetta, 1967)



(1) Environmental Complexity (Schroeder, et al. 1967
(2) Conceptual Complexity (Berlyne, 1965)
(3) Stimulus Uncertainty (Lanzetta, 1967)

FIGURE I

The relationship between environmental complexity, conceptual complexity, stimulus uncertainty and related dependent measures.

The Schroeder, et al. studies, as an example, imply that if the message press of the environment is relatively low then little information will be processed because little is offered, and if the message press is extremely high, little information will be processed because the informational processing capacity of man is limited. Mortensen summarizes:

> The incredible range of human information processing activity cannot be adequately explained apart from the constant interplay between external stimuli and corresponding internal activity of the individual. The impact of external events depends largely on their complexity. Simple environments--those which do not present diverse, ever-changing units of sensory data--stimulate only the lowest levels of processing. Up to a certain optimum level, increasing complexity of environment triggers ever-higher levels of mental activity. Beyond the optimum point, the receiver must sharply reduce his intake of data (1972, p. 76).

Thus, we may conclude that environmental fluctuations tend to require cognitive adjustments by an individual. They require him to adjust his belief or behavioral relationships to the persons, places, things, and ideas in those altered environments. Additionally, it may be noted that such cognitive activity tends to utilize significant portions of an individual's cognitive capacity. As a consequence, the cognitive capacities of individuals may vary in tolerances for performing the mental processes associated with attitude change. This would imply varying tolerances for mentally receiving or rehearsing the components of a persuasive message and subsequently would imply varying tolerances for yielding to these messages.

It is reasonable to conclude that man brings to the communication setting a varied cognitive tolerance for accepting social influence by others. This varience may be a large part of what Miller terms, "Information II (1968)." Further support for the fact that man's capacity to adapt to environmental fluctuations is finite is suggested by Hans Selye (1956) in, The Stress of Life in which he argues that change is a highly stressful, physiologically taxing phenomenon. D.E. Berlyne (1965) suggests that the adaptive capacity of man's cognitive and physiological resources is restricted. Lynn (1966) discusses the physiological dimension of change induced stress from the perspectives of an "orientation response" and describes that as a measure of the physiological effects of change induced by novel stimulation.

George A. Miller, (1967) in The Psychology of Communication discusses the limits of man's informational processing abilities and the possible inverse relationship of information overload to mental health. He observed such as schizophrenia may be a defense reaction of the human organism to an overload of the human cognitive system. And schizophrenia, it seems, may be a reception distortion phenomenon.

Studies by Miller, (1967) and Udansky and Chapman (1960) suggest that one of the overt manifestations of information glut, or overload, is a schizophrenic-like response, an extreme tool for coping with overwhelming environmental press. They seem to imply that such cognitive defense behaviors may fall within a general notion we term "reception distortion behavior."

At the other end of the continuum is research on stimulus deprivation. Lilly (1956) and Heron, et al. (1956) suggest that since deprivation seems to be punishing to an individual, a certain level of varied stimulation is essential for the development of adequateadaptive capabilities. The literature in stimulus deprivation is rife with the finding that an absence of novel stimuli leads to punishing consequences for the individual (see Gunderson & Nelson, 1963 & 1965; Meyers, 1964; McFann, 1964).

A particularly relevant paper by Welch (1964) postulates an optimum level of human activity, or what he terms the "mean level of environmental stimulation." He predicts that fluctuations outside this mean level result in powerful behavioral and physiological responses.

Environmental press, as used here, becomes a factor affecting the relative cognitive capacities of individuals. For the purposes of an adequate conceptual treatment of environmental press it may be wise to separate sources of such stimuli. Although no communication takes place without the interaction of all three sources of environmental press, for conceptual ease we will discuss message press, event press, and consequent press separately.

Message press refers to environmental press created by the introduction of a message. Although 'message' may be very broadly defined, we find McCroskey's term, "rhetorical communication" to be a particularly useful specification of what we refer to as 'message:' "the process of a source stimulating a source-intended meaning in the mind of the receiver by means of verbal and nonverbal messages [1970, p. 22]." This definition excludes environmental press created by such phenomena as accidental and expressive communication but includes such variables as the medium of transmission, and formality or informality of the setting.

Communication researchers have long been aware of the differing stress potential of various message stimuli. Some have talked of involving and non-involving messages (Sereno, 1969), entropic and non-entropic messages (Broadhurst & Darnell, 1965), and message concerning central or peripheral beliefs (Rokeach, 1968). Clearly, some messages require a subject to receive and process more information than others. Some messages require more cognitive rehearsal than others. Some messages are more stressful than others.

Schroeder, Driver, and Streufert (1967), in an exhaustive treatment of information complexity, argue that information load, diversity and rate (as well as the noxity, eucity, involvement or interest, and the degree to which a situation disorients a person) all function as mediators of message impact. Furthermore, as Thompson (1967) noted, the list of potentially relevant message elements is almost endless.

Despite the usefulness of the Schroeder, Driver, and Streufert conceptualization, we find it helpful for the study of communication behavior to organize message press elements somewhat differently.

We see the communicator as mounting an attack upon the

existing relationships (or lack of existing relationships) between some target object and the persons, places, things, and ideas, which serve to structure the individual's world. Such attacks may take two forms: 1) attempts to create new relationships, or 2) attempts to alter existing relationships. If the communicator perceives a receiver as being either unaware, ignorant, or unconcerned, with some person, place, thing, or idea of interest to the communicator, the advocate must try to create a dynamic new relationship between the receiver and the phenomenon of concern. On the other hand, if the communicator perceives the receiver to be maintaining a dangerous, erroneous, or unworthy relationship, to some object of conern to the advocate, the advocate must design a message to change that relationship in the receiver. For any given receiver, the amount and/or significance of message press varies with: (1) the number of relationships attacked or created; (2) the importance or relevance of the relationships attacked or created; and (3) the efficacy of the advocate's attack strategy.

a. When we refer to the number of relationships attacked or created by a message, we refer to the number of relational orientations evoked in a receiver by the advocate. Some messages--those with low press potential--attack (and subsequently evoke) a single minor relationship held by a receiver while others--those with high press potential --contain attacks on many important relationships. For example, the message, "Do not continue using toothpaste "Brand X" because it is highly abrasive," could hardly be argued to alter many, if any, relationships to valued persons, places, or ideas. It merely attacks a minor relationship to a relatively unimportant 'thing' and, as such, the message contains minimal press and requires minimal cognitive coping behavior by the average receiver.*

A high press message attacking numerous relationships (e.g., "Do not buy grapes because farm workers need support and the future of unionization is at stake.") would affect many powerful and well developed relationships between the receiver and various persons, places, things, and ideas, which comprise his map of the world. For example, it might be expected that the receiver of such a message would find his relationship to persons (such as Mexicans, rioters, farmers, union members, clergymen, or storekeepers), to places (such as the local market, the San Joaquin Valley of California, or Mexico), to things (such as grapes and wine), and to ideas (such as unionization, stiking, civil disobedience, or moral obligations), all coming under attack at once. Clearly, such a message would contain considerable press potential and could alter significantly the individual's use of cognitive coping mechanisms.

Obviously, when an advocate presents a message attacking numerous relationships between the receiver and the persons, places, things, and ideas, of importance to that individual, he runs the risk of evoking relationships inconsistent with one another. The discrepancy resulting from such a phenomenon would manifestly intensi-

*The same argument could be made for messages attempting to create new relationships within a receiver, but such a lengthy explication need not be undertaken in this paper.

fy the message press. The artistry of the advocate (i.e., his ability to design a message using the most 'efficacious' persuasive strategy possible) interacts with the number of relationships challenged to determine the amount of press in the message. As might be expected from literature in rhetorical theory (esp. Aristotle, 1932 ed.) as well as the pervasive notion of dynamic equilibrium, the most successful strategy would probably challenge a moderate number of relationships held or not held by the receiver. Despite the importance that the number of challenged relationships plays in the press created by a message, it is true that challenges to a large number of meaningless or irrelevant relationships produces less stress in the individual than challenges to a smaller number of relevant or centrally-held relationships. Thus, understanding the dynamics of message press requires that consideration also be given to relevance of a message's challenges.

b. When we refer to the relevance of the relationships attacked or created by a given message we refer to the 'centrality' or 'periphery' of the relational orientations evoked within a receiver by the message. Rokeach (1963) provides insight into the "centrality-periphery" continuum:

> first, not all beliefs are equally important to the individual; beliefs vary along a central-peripheral dimension; second, the more central--or, in our terminology, the more primitive--a belief, the more it will resist change; third, the more central the belief change, the more widespread the repercussions in the rest of the belief system [In Hollander & Hunt, 1967, p. 375].

The relevance of the challenged relationships, as well as their number directly affect the degree of message press.

It is important to recall that the basic function of an individual's relational orientations is to accommodate him to the numerous persons, places, things, and ideas, which combine to flesh out his map of the world. In this sense, a complex or central relationship (e.g., a person's theological orientations) orient an individual to many important persons, places, things, and ideas, in his world. On the other hand, a simple or peripheral relationship (e.g., an individual's inconsequential beliefs or taste preferences) orients the individual to either very few or very unimportant persons, places, things, and ideas in his world.

Notions from Social Judgment-Involvement Theory (Sherif & Hovland 1961) serve as a complement to the discussion of relevance since it argues for the importance of considering involvement in research efforts. In essence, "ego involvement refers to the relevance, significance, or meaningfulness of the issue or topic to the individual [Sereno, 1969, p. 70]." The more relevant a set of relationships is for the individual, the more resistent the individual is to strategies designed to change those relationships. As Mortensen (1972) suggests:

> One fundamental assumption of Sherif's approach is that individuals differ widely in the degree

> to which they tolerate opposing viewpoints. Generally, the more involved one is in his position, the less tolerant and, hence, the less discriminative his evaluative judgments become. Observations of these differences can be determined by studying certain lattitudes of rejection and noncommitment. Lattitude suggests a range or breadth of tolerance (p. 164.)

Message relevance, therefore, functions as a variable of message press for any given receiver. In other words, as the relational change proposed by a communicator attacks the more central or involving orientations within an individuals relational world, the press upon the individual's finite cognitive capacity increases.

From the perspective of any given individual, the dynamic equilibrium principle holds that the optimal message would be that message which attacks relationships which are neither extremely irrelevant or extremely relevant. In other words, a message which attacks extremely irrelevant relationships might be perceived as nonsense or as a trivial bore by a given receiver. Messages discrepant with extremely relevant relationships might be perceived as insane. For the receiver to yield to an attack on extremely relevant relationship--one to which he is centrally committed--the individual would have to restructure a major portion of his relational world. Clearly, the cognitive consequences of such attacks would exhaust the cognitive capacities of most persons.

Intuition, bolstered by a wealth of research on the reception of novel information (Broadbent, 1958, Voronin and Sokolov, 1960, and Thompson & Solomon, 1954) and the reception of highly discrepant communication (Cohen, 1959, Hovland, Harvey, & Sherif, 1957, and Sherif & Hovland, 1961) suggests that extreme press messages are often ignored or rejected by receivers. Furthermore, the overall press of a message (whatever the number or relevance of relational orientations being attacked) can be intensified by the third variable of message press--efficacy.

c. When we refer to the efficacy of the message we refer to a broad list of message attributes which serve to increase the effectiveness of a given communication. Such message variables as credibility, common ground, fear arousal, order effects, evidence, specificity of recommendations, one- versus two-sided messages, language emotiveness, humor, voice, and delivery factors, have been exhaustively reviewed elsewhere. (see Beisecker & Parson, 1972). The primary role played by these variables is that of an intensifier. When a communicator sets out to change or create relationships between some receiver and the persons, places, things and ideas, which define the receiver's world, the overall press created by his message is a function of the number and relevance of relationships attacked, and the efficacy of his communication. Efficacy, in other words, intensifies the attention-perception phenomenon of receivers and subsequently energizes the reception of a source intended meaning. The more vividly a receiver is able to perceive the various reward/punishment potentials of proposed environmental oreintations to any given person, place, thing, or idea, the more likely it is that he will adopt an appropriate orientation to that person, place, thing or idea.

In sum, message press is but one factor impinging upon an individual's over all environmental press. Events and perceived consequences also can serve as press phenomenon, as the following pages will suggest. Messages, we have argued, vary across a broad nonmonotonic range of press potentials (as a function of the number and relevance of relational orientations attacked times the efficacy, vividness or skill by which the attacks are communicated).

As mentioned earlier, Strain Toward Stability theory focuses upon messages as a central source of environmental press. However, we also grant that events in our environment have tremendous impact upon the general level of environmental press and the overall stability of individuals' environments. The following section will develop this construct more thoroughly.

Event press refers to the environmental press created by the experiencing of events. By events, we are refering to such phenomena as marriages, divorces, traffic tickets, accidents, breakdowns of cars, friendships, jobs, or beliefs. Where messages attempt to make receivers mentally encounter changes in relationships to various persons, places, things, or ideas; events force encounters with various alterations in relationships to persons, places, things, and ideas. The message, "You had better fix your car or it will break down on you someday,""is designed to cause a reciever to mentally encounter a breakdown situation. The event of that breakdown, however, forces the immediate readjustment to an environmental exigence. At the bare minimum, the individual is compelled to adjust to an environment demanding reorientations to time, money, and car relationships. Depending upon his destinatinn and financial state, the event of the breakdown could be either moderately or extremely stressful upon his cognitive capacity.

Lest the "breakdown" example lead to the assumption that only undesirable events result in press upon an individual's environment, we point out that desirable events such as marriages, births of children, or job promotions also result in much stress. By stress, we refer to the number and relevance of relationships which require readjustment following the experiencing of an event, regardless of the desirability or undesirability of that event.

The fact that cognitive overload may result from events within individual environments seems to be deducible from research by Holmes and Rahe (1967). These researchers found a very high correlation between the amount of "life change" experienced by an individual and his subsequent physical health. They found that the severity and frequency of illness is often related to major life change events. By developing a research instrument which provided numerical weights for a list of fifty life events, Holmes and Rahe were able to estimate the effect of the event press on the likelihood of illness to be suffered by individuals. Although overall reliability estimates were not reported for the instrument, the researchers found high agreement among subpopulations in the ranking of certain events (e.g. death of spouse was universally ranked as the highest press event, followed closely by divorce). In research with the Life Change Units Scale applied to navy personnel stationed on an aircraft carrier for six months, Holmes and Rahe found that illness could be predicted from a knowledge of the rate of press from life events. Men in the upper ten percent of life change units (measured before stationing on the aircraft carrier)--those who had experienced the greatest amount of change in events surrounding them during the last twelve months--suffered

from 150% to 200% as much illness as the bottom ten percent. Similar confirmation can be found in the work of Rahe, McKean, & Arthur (1967), Masuda & Holmes (1967a,b,), Wyler, Masuda, & Holmes (1968), Casey, Masuda, & Holmes (1967), Gunderson, Rahe, & Arthur (1968), and Brown & Birely (1968). In a same vein, Young, Benjamin, & Wallis (1963) found that the event of widowhood reduces resistance to illness and increases the rate of aging. The researchers argued that "the excess mortality in the first six months is almost certainly real . . . death of a spouse appears to bring in its wake a sudden increment in mortality rates something like 40 percent in the first six months (p. 456)." In sum, it appears that event press taxes substantial amounts of the organism's adaptive capacities.

Despite the assistance that the Holmes and Rahe scale has been for estimating event press, a careful review of the scale items reveal it to be limited to adult populations. We beleive that the development of an Environmental Stability Scale with items appropriate to the college student population (which is typically tapped by communication researchers) would be a helpful first step toward operationalizing event press.

Individuals who experience only small amounts of event press, we believe, are not likely to be receptive to persuasive messages (across levels of message press) since they have not learned how to deal with additional stimuli. In short, they experience "cognitive inertia" since they have been in a position to avoid events which would press their adaptive mechanisms. Those who have experienced extremely high amounts of event press cannot adequately deal with persuasive messages since their finite cognitive capacities are already occupied with adjusting to events in their environment. Only those subjects who have experienced moderate amounts of event press are in an optimal position to respond to additional message stimuli. These subjects are more capable of participating in those behaviors conducive to receptive-yielding attitude change behaviors (e.g., cognitive rehearsing, ventriloquism, or cognitive role playing). Across situations, persuasive strategies which are most likely to be effective are those which meld a moderate press message with a moderate event pressed receiver. This prediction, however, is qualified by the importance of another souce of environmental press, consequent press.

Consequent press refers to the environmental press created by the perception of rewards or punishments FOR holding a given viewpoint. Because this construct is developed elsewhere (Bodaken & Crawford, 1973), its relevance to this theory will only be summarized here.

Consequent press is defined in terms of a direct monotonic factor which may intensify environmental press resulting from message and event stimuli. As the immediacy of perceived rewards and punishments for holding a set of relationshps increases, so does the total environmental press (including that created by messages and events). If a member of the John Birch Society receives a message which favors the activities of the United Nations, he is unlikely to automatically change his mind to the other side of the continuum,

even if he is having doubts about the mephitic nature of the U.N. Instead he may weigh the perceived rewards and punishments which would come about if he changed his mind. If a change in viewpoint would be rewarding to him (he determines) because it would put him in the majority opinion in this country, he still might not find it worthwhile to change his mind unless he believed that social acceptance would be immediate instead of delayed. If, on the other hand, the same doubting John Bircher finds himself at a symposium of college professors who favor the U.N.'s activities, and who, additionally, tell him that they want to like him but his position on the U.N. makes such immediate acceptance difficult, the John Bircher might be inclined to change his opinion of the U.N. The press of messages and events probably would have been within a moderate range and the rewards to be gained high and immediate. Thus, the construct of consequent press serves to energize the press created from events and messages. The larger and more immediate the reward, the more likely the individual is to be responsive to a persuasive appeal.

Consequent press may be positively or negatively valanced. If an individual perceives the consequences of a choice to be desirable, the consequence press is "positively valenced." If an individual perceives the consequences of a choice to be undesirable, the consequent press is "negatively valenced." Since persuasive effect is an individual's choice to accept an advocate's plea, consequent press must be considered from the perspective of the suggested choice. If an individual perceives that accepting the advocate's position would result in severe social ostracism, the consequent press would be described as "valenced highly negative." If, on the other hand, acceptance of the position is perceived as bringing with it desirable consequences, the consequent press would be described as "valenced highly positive."

In sum consequent press serves to allow the individual to respond and internalize a change in his relationships to persons, places, things, and ideas, by melding the message and event press factors together with regard to expected rewards or punishments.

The three factors of message, event, and consequent press, provide a means of estimating the stress potential existing in the interaction between messages and individuals in the communication setting. The first two factors postulate that optimal reception to persuasive messages will be those in which message press is within a moderate range, and event press is within a moderate range. The third factor, consequent press, implies that as reward and immediacy of reward for holding the advocated position increases, the persuasive impact of a message will be optimized.

The precise manner in which the individual does or does not yield to incoming information is the concern of the third major construct, cognitive coping mechanisms.

3. COGNITIVE COPING MECHANISMS

Cognitive Coping Mechanisms serve an adjustive function for the individual by regulating the perception of environmental press. Persons experiencing extremely low environmental press may generate or even halucinate stimuli (e.g. Walter Mitty-type activities)

and persons experiencing extremely high environmental press might distort, selectively perceive, or engage in objectively inappropriate behaviors (e.g., as in the case of victims of the 1963 BelAir brush fires who insisted on cleaning their houses before they abandoned them to be burned), in order to reduce or otherwise accommodate to the relative stress levels.

From the perspective of the Strain Toward Stability theory, we are concerned with cognitive processes which mediate an individuals willingness or ability to change or create orientational relationships between himself and the persons, places, things and ideas which make up his world. We assume that there are constant pressures upon an individual to change his relational orientations as a consequent of his persistent exposure to events and messages within his environment. However, we realize that some relational orientations and attitudes resist intense pressures to change. Other relationships change in response to seemingly minor pressures. From the perspective of communication theory, it would be useful to categorize the factors which may account for the variance in yielding behaviors for individuals or specific populations.

Whereas the environmental press construct concerns the important characteristics of change inducing stimuli, the cognitive coping mechanisms construct concerns the mental processes which occur between environmental press and relational changes or attitudinal responses.

Cognitive coping mechanisms, according to McGuire (1968) include systems "of perceptual defense, and distortions of perception, comprehension or memory, such that the person manages to understand the message as being more in agreement with this own initial opinion than it really was (pp. 1174-75);" or, on the other hand, to perceive messages as being more discrepant from one's own initial opinion than it really is. A more thorough and heuristic treatment of these "assimilation-contrast" propositions can be found in the literature on Social Judgment-Involvement theory (Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965) which suggests not only a rationale but a useful approach for estimating such reception-distortion phenomena.

As developed within the Social Judgment-Involvement approach, the latitudes of acceptance, rejection, and noncommitment allow one to make inferences regarding the presence of either assimilation effects (viz., the assessment by the individual that a stimulus object is closer to his judgmental anchor than it actually is) or contrast effects (viz., the assessment by the individual that a stimulus object is farther away from his judgmental anchor than it actually is) Sherif & Sherif, 1964). In the case of response to a persuasive message, it may be concluded that regardless of which specific cognitive coping mechanisms are employed, movements of latitudes should result from such behaviors. More specifically, an individual attempting to resist a persuasive message should tend to use cognitive coping mechanisms to contrast the communication. Contrasting would be reflected by increases in the latitude of rejection (Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965). An individual who is susceptible to a persuasive message should tend to use cognitive coping mechanisms appropriate to the assimilation of the message as

reflected by a decrease in the latitude of rejection and an increase in the latitude of acceptance.

Unlike traditional attitude measurement approaches, the concern with assimilation and contrast is not isolated to observations of movements in the most acceptable position. Concern with latitude data is of special interest in this approach. This does not mean that movement of the most acceptable position is ignored. However, the Social Judgment-Involvement approach views change in the most acceptable position as part of a more complex attitude construct (Sereno & Bodaken, 1972). Within this larger attitude system, the most acceptable position is predicted to be most likely to change when the latitude of rejection is low and the latitude of acceptance is high (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Thus, change in the most acceptable position is one indicant of the assimilation effect while little or no amounts of change in the most acceptable position may signal the existance of a contrast effect.

Thus, estimates of most acceptable, positions, latitudes of acceptance, rejection, and noncommitment, would tend to be useful operationalizations of the use of cognitive coping mechanisms. The analysis of such data, according to the above predictions, should allow researchers to make useful inferences as to the presence of assimilation-contrast behaviors.

In retrospect three constructs have been explicated in order to provide a conceptual framework for the Strain Toward Stability theory. First, we have argued that man seeks a dynamic equilibrium in the number and relevance of relational changes which events and messages in his environment press upon him. Second, we have argued that individuals strive to maintain a <u>stable</u> relationship to the persons, places, things and ideas which interact to make up ones environment. Third, we have suggested that when individuals cope with their environments they reveal significant portions of their coping process through the use of assimilation-contrast behaviors. It now seems useful to specify the assumptions and limitations of the theory and then to procede with a statement of the theoretic postulates derived from the theory.

<u>Assumptions and Limitations</u>

The theoretic statements which follow this section assume four major conditions of human behavior:

(1) individusals <u>learn</u> various cognitive defense behaviors which may serve as reception mediators and consequently as yielding defenses (e.g., assimilation-contrast ego-involvment behaviors);

(2) environmental press is a function of <u>individual tolerances</u> for the relative strain effects of reception yielding upon the belief-behavior or relational equilibrium of an individual;

(3) <u>individual tolerances</u> for environmental press may vary as a function of an individual's personality or intellectual capacities for belief and or behavioral change within social influence situations as a function of environmental factors; and

(4) messages cannot be separated from the situations in which they are transmitted.

Granted these assumptions, three major limitations may be added.

(1) dynamic equilibrium, although a useful construct, cannot be directly observed or measured within any given individual. McGuire, who advocates adoption of a dynamic equilibrium perspective warns that the notion "is hardly testable by empirical outcomes in view of its tenuous multistep logical relation to any testable derrivations (p. 1172, 1968)."

(2) the predictions have applicability only in free choice settings. Role playing, forced compliance, and counterattitudinal advocacy paradigms do not seem to be amenable to the predictions of this theory.

(3) specific cognitive coping mechanisms cannot be directly tapped except as clusters of assimilation or contrast behaviors. This limitation may be transient, depending upon the development of research methods.

These limitations, together with the preceding assumptions, set the framework for the theoretic postulates that follow.

Theoretic Postulates

Consequent Press Axioms. When consequent press upon an individual is low, there are so many variables which may intervene to determine an individual's behavior that until some research assessing the issue is completed, we must conclude that this theory can offer no predictions regarding behavioral responses under such conditions. However, it is axiomatic that:

1. individuals experiencing large amounts of negatively valenced consequent press will tend to employ "contrasting" cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with persuasive communications.

2. Individuals experiencing large amounts of positively valenced consequent press will exhibit behavior in accordance with the postulates below.

Message Press Propositions. Across all levels of event press, the organism, in its quest for dynamic equilibrium, will strain for stability according to the following three propositions:

1. Individuals experiencing large amounts of message press will tend to employ "contrasting" cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with persuasive communications.

2. Individuals experiencing moderate amounts of message press will tend to employ "assimilating" cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with persuasive communications.

3. Individuals experiencing small amounts of message press will tend to employ "contrasting" cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with persuasive communications.

Event Press Propositions. Across all levels of message press, the organism, in its quest for dynamic equilibrium, will strain for stability in the manner suggested by the following three propositions:

4. Individuals experiencing large amounts of event press will tend to employ "contrasting" cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with a persuasive communication.

5. Individuals experiencing moderate amounts of event press will tend to employ "assimilating" cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with a persuasive communication.

6. Individuals experiencing small amounts of event press will tend to employ "contrasting" cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with a persuasive communication.

Clearly, the propositions regarding message press and event press suggest that individuals will be most persuaded when they experience environmental press which is within a moderate range. Of course, event and message press interact. This leads us to formulate nine interaction propositions which explicate the conditions represented in figure below:

MESSAGE PRESS

EVENT PRESS	LOW	MOD	HI
HI	+ 7	? 8	- 9
MOD	? 10	+ 11	? 12
LOW	+ 13	? 14	- 15

Key:
-: contrasting behavior
+: assimilating behavior
?: random variation expected (given present knowledge)

FIGURE II

Message press-event press interaction effect upon individuals reception yielding behavior.

7. Individuals experiencing large amounts of event press and low amounts of message press will tend to employ assimilating cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with persuasive communications.

8. Individuals experiencing large amounts of event press and moderate amounts of message press will tend to employ either assimilating or contrasting cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with a persuasive communication.

9. Individuals experiencing large amounts of event press and high amounts of message press will tend to employ contrasting cognitive coping mechanisms when confronted with a persuasive communication.

10. Individuals experiencing moderate amounts of event press and low amounts of message press will tend to employ either assimilating or contrasting cognitive coping mechanisms when

confronted with a persuasive communication.

11. Individuals experiencing moderate amounts of event press and moderate amounts of message press will tend to employ assimilating cognitive coping mechanisms when exposed to persuasive communication.

12. Individuals experiencing moderate amounts of event press and high amounts of message press will tend to employ either assimilating or contrasting cognitive coping mechanisms when exposed to persuasive communication.

13. Individuals experiencing low amounts of event press and low amounts of message press will tend to employ assimilating cognitive mechanisms when exposed to persuasive communication.

14. Individuals experiencing low amounts of event press and moderate amounts of message press will tend to employ either assimilating or contrasting cognitive coping mechanisms when exposed to persuasive communication.

15. Individuals experiencing low amounts of event press and high amounts of message press will tend to employ contrasting cognitive coping mechanisms when exposed to persuasive communication

EXPLANATION AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Persons experiencing high press from events in their environment bring to the communication setting such a restricted or preoccupied cognitive capacity that the only message which can be assimilated (the only relationship toward persons, places, things, or ideas, they can change) is a low press message which challenges only minor relations orientations. Such reorganization of relationships would not be of great magnitude. Yet, some modification probably would occur when a high event pressed subject is confronted with a low message press communication. With such limited cognitive capacity created by the high event press, moderate press messages may or may not be yielded to by the receiver. Such determination of prediction awaits research for verification. Obviously, however, the high press message would be rejected by the high event pressed individual since acceptance (indeed reception, itself) requires more cognitive space than the individual has available at the time. As a hypothetical example, one may consider the case of a newly married, drafted, injured, and bankrupted individual. He probably could be induced to change his relational orientation to the tooth paste he uses, he might or might not be susceptible to persuasive messages regarding his relationship to having his teeth cleaned but almost certainly, this is not the time to try and get him to have his teeth capped and straightened.

Moderate event press individuals bring to the communication setting a degree of involvement with their environment but they also possess the cognitive capacity to deal with additional changes in that environment. Unlike the high press individual who is only capable of yielding to low press messages, the moderate press individual finds such stimuli trivial. The moderate press individual is optimally affected by a moderate press message. Furthermore, unlike either the high or low press individual, the moderate press person is the only subject who could be assumed to have the cog-

nitive capacity to cope with and yield to a high press message. To continue with our example, consider the individual who experienced marriage, a promotion and a recent traffic ticket. When this moderate event press individual is given a persuasive communication about toothpaste he might or might not yield to the communication but he will probably tend to find the subject trivial, especially in comparison to the more interesting and important questions of dental hygene which he could consider. For this moderate event press individual, the "teeth cleaning" message would most likely have an optimal influence because it addresses a moderate number of moderatley relevant relationships. In other words, the moderate message neither stresses a number of relevant relational orientations which are so peripheral or so central as to make assimilation impossible.

Furthermore, as the 12th proposition states, the moderate press individual is the only subject who could be expected to assimilate a high press message. Unlike the low press individual who would most likely find the subject matter of such a message inconceivable and subject to an incredulity response, the moderate press individual recognizes its potential relevance and could, depending on many unknown factors, attempt to assimilate it. The moderate press individual could attempt to consider the financial, cosmetic, interpersonal and personal consequences of having his teeth straightened and capped. He may or may not actually go through with the procedure, but whether or not he actually goes to a dentist, our argument is that only the moderate change person is <u>capable</u> of seriously considering the idea.

The low event press individual brings to the communication setting a restricted cognitive capacity, restricted because it is undeveloped. He is hesitant to change or create relationships toward relevant persons, places, things and ideas simply because he perceives no good or sufficient reason for changing his present map of the world.

As an example of our low event press individual, we have difficulty avoiding our stereotypical notions of the Nebraskan hick or (as depicted in a recent commercial) the young Texas cowboy wandering bewildered through New York's JFK airport awaiting rescue by a Pan Am ground hostess. However, in keeping with our other examples, let us consider the case of the individual who is single, living at home with a stable source of support. This low event press individual is reasoned to find a 'tooth paste' message relatively interesting and important. He likely will assimilate it. The moderate press message advocating "teeth cleaning" may or may not be within his range of cognitive reception. However, he may be expected to find the idea of capping and straightening his teeth intolerably novel.

In sum, the main effect propositions of the theory suggest that across all levels of message press, those individuals most likely to assimilate communications are those experiencing moderate amounts of event press. Across amounts of event press, all individuals are expected to assimilate low press messages. Since these messages concern such minor or trivial subjects and relations, however, it would probably not be of much interest to most advocates whether or not such messages are successful. Clearly, when significant subject areas of public policy are of concern to communicators, any messages

they design regarding those subjects are at least of moderate press potential. As noted, across levels of event press, the most successful strategy for achieving optimal influence upon optimally relevant (and hence, significant) relational orientations, is to construct messages of moderate press potential.

The interaction propositions imply that the moderate event press individual is the only individual capable of assimilating all messages. He is expected to assimilate moderate press messages to a greater degree than he does either high or low press messages, however. Both the high and low event press individual is optimally affected by low press messages because of the restricted cognitive capacities which they bring to the communication setting. There is a qualified probability that they may assimilate moderate press messages but it is highly unlikely that they would assimilate high press messages.

It should be reiterated that the predictions made from this theory only have applicability to those circumstances in which consequent press is valenced moderately to highly positive. When a moderate event press individual is faced with a moderate message press persuasive communication, he may not change his point of view in favor of the position advocated by the communication if he perceives that accepting such a position would result in punishment from others. If a member of the Knights of Columbus found himself impressed by a persuasive communication that advocated the use of birth control methods by Catholics, he might not be inclined to change his position if he perceived that other members of the Knights of Columbus would have knowledge of his position. Such consequent press would be high (or perceived to be) and negatively valenced (forboding social punishments). If consequent press is very low, this theory offers no predictions since too little information is extant to warrant such theorizing. Suffice it to say, consequent press must be operating at moderate to high positive valenced levels in order to make research predictions possible.

Strain toward Stability Theory makes its major contribution in the melding of research efforts in communication into a large framework which allows an integration of efforts into a unified whole. Furthermore, some specific research-stimulating claims can be made for this theory.

First, the theory allows some reinterpretation of the reason for the persuasiveness or lack of persuasivenesses of specific message variables. Researchers concerned with the impact of evidence, order effects, style, or any other message variables, could estimate the impact of those variables in relation to the nonmonotonic predictions which flow from this theory. Message variables which introduce differing amounts of environmental press could be tested to determine effectiveness of a host of potential message alternatives.

Second, this theory suggests some of the specific attributes of what Miller (1969) terms "Information II." It is our belief--that comprehensive theory in communication should take into account not only the strategic messages manipulated, but the nature of the receiver interacting with the message. The notions of event press and consequent press provide some useful direction for viewing clusters of behavior which compose information. Although one viewing this theory

from a strictly psychological perspective could view these two variables (especially event press) as merely a new personality variable to be investigated, we take special note of the fact that these constructs concern themselves with elements which might lead to the prediction of the manifestation of personality variables in individuals. As a predictor of a host of behaviors (clustered as cognitive coping mechanisms) this theory allows a preliminary analysis of the elements of Information II which appear key to understanding human communicative interaction.

Third, the theory lies on such a level of abstraction that it might allow one to recast social judgment-involvement theory under the tenet of Strain Toward Stability Theory. Whereas Social Judgment-Involvement Theory predicts that those who are highly ego-involved will tend to employ contrast behaviors, this theory may allow the prediction of those individuals who will be ego-involved.

Fourth, Strain Toward Stability Theory suggests fruitful ways to predict persuasibility form a knowledge of audiences. If an advocate has a knowledge that his audience is already highly pressed, he may be in a position to adjust the stress potential of his messages accordingly. The approach may provide a way of breaking down subpopulations based upon an understanding of the life events experienced by the individuals composing the group. Thus, more effective designing of strategic messages may be employed. An advocate with a forceful and significant message to relate may adjust it to the audience after gaining a knowledge of the amount of environmental press already confronting them. Isolation of high and low press groups could yield research leading to thoughtful understanding of the manner in which differentially pressed individuals respond.

Fifth, the pre-eminence of the nonmonotonic predictions in Strain Toward Stability Theory seems particularly useful for communication researchers who have found a large number of nonmonotonic relationships among communication related variables (McGuire, 1968). The key construct, environmental press, provides a valuable way of estimating the stress potential which may exist in a communication setting. Re-examination of the nonmonotonic relationships found between intelligence, self-esteem, anxiety, aggressiveness, dogmatism (Beisekcer & Parson, 1972, esp. p. 14), fear appeal (Janis & Feshbach, 1953), amount of advocated change (Whitaker, in Beisecker & Parson, 1972), and a host of other variables, with the variable of attitude change, suggests the wisdom of looking for a nonmonotonic view of communication and persuasion interaction. This approach argues for examining the stress potential of events and messages to determine their impact on the individual's reception-yielding behaviors in his quest to establish dynamic equilibrium. Specific research efforts will be required before a determination of the relationship between environmental press and other communication variables can be specified.

Summary

This study attempts to develop and begin testing a theory concerned with the impact of environmental stimulation on an individual's response to persuasive communication. The theory postulates a nonmonotonic relationship between "environmental press" and persuasibility. It is maintained

that the number and power of stressful life events (e.g., divorce, death of a parent, traffic citations) which an individual experiences affects the "finite cognitive capacity" of the individual. Those who have experienced only small amounts of environmental stimulation tend to suffer from cognitive inertia and are not equipped to use their "finite cognitive capacity" to process and accept new ideas communicated to them. Once, however, the individual has learned to use his cognitive capacity he tends to seek what McGuire calls a "dynamic equilibrium" of active involvement without punishing over- or understimulation. It is expected that persons in this group will be more likely to yield to persuasive communication than others. Additionally, those individuals who experience extreme amounts of environmental stimulation tend to suffer from exhaustion of their cognitive capacities (what Toffler terms "future shock") and are not able to process additional communication, let alone yield to it. Thus, differing reception-distortion behaviors (dogmatism, ego-involvement, etc.) are manifested by individuals as a consequence of their differing tolerances to yield to the belief or behavioral changes implied in the persuasive communication.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE EVENT PRESS

As a major component of environmental press, it seemed necessary to design a measurement instrument to estimate the degree of event press. Despite the fact that Holmes and Rahe (1967) and Masuda and Holmes (1967) developed a Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire appropriate to adult populations, no effort has been made to develop an instrument appropriate to college poulations of the type typically sampled by communication researchers. The researchers attempted to develop an Environmental Stability Scale appropriate to college populations. Procedures similar to those employed by Holmes and Rahe were used for the scale development.

The purpose of the Environmental Stability Scale is to provide a quantitative estimate for the amount of adjustment required as a consequence of experiencing different life events. By use of a paper and pencil test it was possible to attain estimates of how important and stressful (in terms of the amount of readjustment required) various events were to the individual.

Method

Construction of the Environmental Stability Scale consisted of selection of items, procedures for data collection, and estimation of reliability and validity.

1. SELECTION OF ITEMS

Selection of items was the first concern of the researchers. Three steps were followed to select items. First, the researchers took items from the Holmes and Rahe scale which seemed to be appropriate to the college population. From past research with the Holmes and Rahe instrument (Crawford, 1971) it was learned that some items (e.g. vacations, Christmas) even though they applied to college students as well as adults, seem not to elicit responses from subjects. Thus, such items were not chosen for presentation to students. After selecting fifty items (some from the Holmes and Rahe scale and most created by the researchers) a pilot scale was printed and given to forty subjects (chosen from Speech courses at U.S.C.) in a pilot group. The second step involved the researchers interviewing all students who took the pilot questionnaire to determine if the instructions they received seemed clear and sensible to them, and if the scale items seemed relevant to their careers as college students. Their suggestions for scale items were noted and information gathered from the interviews were recorded to facilitate recognition of any patterns of advice and criticism. The overwhelming consensus of students was that the task would be sensibly perfor ed if at least two conceptual anchors were given as starting points (instead of the single magnitude estimate approach employed by Holmes and Rahe), one rated as highly stressful and one rated as lowly stressful. Only minor changes in instructions were suggested by students. In addition, subjects indicated persons which they would find to be credible sources on various topics. In sum, the interviews did not reflect any substantial confusion, anxiety, or misunderstanding of the task to be performed. The third step involved reconstruction of the scale to account for the recommendations which had been made. According to recommendations received from subjects, the sets of instructions were also adapted where necessary. A total of fifty items were included on the final scale.

2. PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

Materials were printed in questionnaire form. The first page of the questionnaire included certain demographic data about subjects, collected for additional research on the Environmental Stability Scale conducted by the researchers (Reinard & Crawford, 1973a). For follow up research on attitude change, subjects were asked to give their names. Pilot interviews had revealed that very few subjects refused to give their names; digits from their social security numbers served as the means of identification. The latter technique had been suggested to the researchers during interviews by subjects opposed to revealing their names. Subjects were repeatedly assured of confidentiality.

Subjects received instructions for completion of the Environmental Stability Scale (see Appendix I). As suggested in interviews, two items were chosen for conceptual anchors, a high-ranking event, and a low-ranking event. Each of these was assigned numerical value. With "graduated from high school" (50 points) and "death of a parent" (200 points) serving as anchors, subjects were asked to complete the rest of the scale. Three columns were provided the students. In the first column they were asked to assess the amount of adjustment created by each event proportionately larger, smaller, or the same, as the two anchors provided them. If the event happened to them, they were asked to place a check-mark in the second column which was marked "to me." If the event happened to subjects in the last twelve months, subjects were asked to place a check-mark in the third column which was marked, "last twelve months." Whether or not the events happened to them, subjects were asked to make an assessment of the amount of adjustment requirement by each event. At a later time comparisons would be made between subjects' ratings if they merely assigned a value, if the event had happened to them, or if the event had happened to them in the last twelve months. The order of items was systematically varied to control for subject fatigue.

Students in the Basic Speech Course at the University of Southern California served as subjects for construction of the scale. This sample follows random selection (A Million Random Digits. . .,1955) of 88% of the original 272 subject sample of convenience. Since random assignment to different conditions was impossible (all subjects completed the same test items) random selection of a working sample from a larger original sample seemed required in order to claim the advantages of randomization.

Test booklets were numbered and placed in random order (A Million Random Digits . . .1955) for distribution to subjects in their classrooms. Following distributuion of the booklets, subjects were asked to read the instructions for completion of the first page eliciting demographic information, complete the first page, read the instructions for completion of the Environmental Stability Scale (ESS), and complete the booklets. Afterwards, the booklets were collected and subjects were thanked for their assistance. Once again the subjects were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially and the results used for statistical purposes only.

3. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity estimations were next to be established. Since this was a rating scale, not an attitude measure, some of the more straightforward techniques were not possible, i.e., factor analysis,

correlation of item to tatal. The chief question posed by a test of reliability was, given a numeric value for life events, how consistent were subjects in their rating of events? Several steps were followed to assess reliability.

First, the mean score for each item selected as the best estimate of the numeric value assigned for each event. These were placed in order of their "stress power" and standard errors were computed for each. The second step determined whether subjects who merely assigned values, subjects to whom the event had occurred, and subjects to whom the event occurred in the last twelve months, differed in their estimation of the stress power of the life change events. Fifty separate one way analyses of variance were performed, one for each scale item. Since unequal N's were used it was necessary to be careful that the probability of type I and type II errors was not a bias element. In order to adapt the results gained by using a nominal significance level of .05, the actual probability of a type I error was estimated from Scheffe's (1959, see also Glass & Stanley, 1970, p. 371) tables and tested for significance with another critical F ratio (see for decision modification guideline information the work of Boneau 1960; Cochran, 1947; Godard & Lindquist, 1940; Horsnell, 1953; Welch, 1937). The overall effect of such a move was to adjust the data so that it would not be falsely biased to indicate consistency when none existed on items. Even with these procedures, differences were found on only two items out of the fifty (i.e., going to jail and experiencing a natural disaster). Thus, when subjects have experienced these events within the last twelve months, their score on such events does not seem to be numerically different from the mean score of those who have merely experienced the same event sometime during their lives. Thus, in assigning a score for later summation in the rating scale, one must know whether the event has been a recent one or not. The weighting of these items together with the standard errors of the test items may be found in Appendix II.

The third step required the assessment of internal consistency. Among the most respected methods of determining reliability for continuous data is Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1970, esp. pp. 160-161). "If the coefficient alpha specifies a relationship of .80 or higher, the investigator has constructed a reliable scale (Danes & Knutson, 1972, after Nunnally, 1967)." The score indicates, "How well scores obtained by testing under just one condition . . . represent universe scores (Cronbach, 1970, p. 160)." The computed coefficient alpha produced a relationship of .87, enough to justify the claim of consistency among subjects. Despite the fact that the scale was deemed reliable enough to warrant preliminary research, further estimates of reliability are being completed by the researchers employing stepwise miltiple regression correlation and following further research, multiple discriminant analysis. For purposes of preliminary study, the scale reported here was deemed reliable enough.

The fourth step required the assessment of validity of the instrument. Aside from clear face validity (i.e. subjects were rating the stress power of events which had or could befall them), a measure of concurrent validity was made. In correlating a new measure of ESS with an older method of Social Readjustment Rating an estimate of this validity would be possible (Horst, 1966; Nunally, 1967). In this case, 122 subjects' scores on the Holmes & Rahe (1967) Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire were correlated with scores on the Environmental Stability

Scale. The resultant validity coefficient was .8575, significant at the .001 level. Thus, concurrent validity was concluded for the instrument.

Discussion

By assessment of a reliable set of values which represent the amount of readjustment required from an experiencing of various life events, an estimate of the extent of event press may be made. By use of the instrument designed here, a preliminary estimate of event press--applied to the college population--may be undertaken.

As applied to a research setting the ESS may be given to subjects with the instructions that they check those events which have occurred to them in the last twelve months. For each event the individual checks a numeric value may be assigned. These values may be summed and an estimate of the total amount of event press estimated. The higher an individual's score, the greater he is pressed by events in his environment and the more he must adapt to them.

The preliminary work on the reliability and validity of the ESS instrument indicates surprising amounts of consistency among subjects on the importance of various events, and further research suggests the validity of the measure as a tool to estimate event press among college populations. Although further research on the validity of the instrument is underway to determine the limits of the instruments reliability and validity, the present tool seems to be reliable enough to justify some initial research using it.'

With the theory in mind and the preliminary ESS instrument in hand, the researchers made an effort to begin preliminary pilot work in testing some implications of the theory. The experiment reported below is a synopsis of that experimental attempt.

It must be emphasized that this research does not prove any portion of the theory. It is only pilot exploration with a primary attempt to determine tactical considerations for formal experimentation to follow. It is reported here only as a point of information to those who may be interested in the experimental research which has been stimulated by the theory. Part of the reason why this preliminary exploration does not address itself to many of the basic considerations of the theory lies in the fact that such research was begun before the tenets of the theory were articulated in any depth. As a result, the research effort was doomed to impotence before it was completed. The researchers take this fact as an object lesson in the rule that (except in the rarest of cases) research which is begun without an articulated theory to guide it will yield fragmented and unsatisfying results.

A PRELIMINARY PILOT EXPLORATION OF ONE PREDICTION OF STRAIN TOWARD STABILITY THEORY

Initially, the research had been planned to test the three theoretic propositions dealing with the effects of event press, however, when pretest results demonstrated the inappropriateness of a message on "tax incentives for small famility size," and a low press message had not been designed, only the effects of a high press message were tested. Specifically, propositions nine, twelve, and thirteen, were addressed in research briefly reported here. Since no direct manipulation of

consequent press was made, it is difficult to tell whether consequent press was valenced highly, negatively, or positively. Thus, this preliminary pilot research serves more as a dry run with an experimental message, than it does as proof of any part of the theory. These limitations are major and the researchers do not wish to mislead any reader into the belief that the preliminary pilot research reported here garners support for any portion of the theory. It is reported only as a note of interest. Research now underway by the researchers will attempt to overcome these defects and provide more substantive confirmation or rejection of hypotheses derived from this theory.

With these caveats in mind, the preliminary pilot research hypotheses to which the research was directed may be stated. These are based on the assumption that consequent press was positively valanced;

H_1: When presented with a high press, persuasive communication subjects experiencing moderate amounts of event press will demonstrate significantly greater change of their most acceptable position in the direction of the communication, than subjects experiencing low or high amounts of event press.

H_2: When presented with a high press persuasive communication, subjects experiencing moderate amounts of event press will demonstrate a significantly greater decrease in their latitudes of rejection than subjects experiencing low or high amounts of event press.

H_3: When presented with a high press persuasive communication subjects experiencing moderate amounts of event press will demonstrate a significantly greater increase in their latitudes of acceptance than subjects experiencing low or high amounts of event press.

H_4: When presented with a high press persuasive communication, subjects experiencing moderate amounts of event press will demonstrate a significantly greater increase in their latitudes of noncommitment than subjects experiencing low or high amounts of event press.

Obviously, these hypotheses predict that moderate event pressed subjects will assimilate the persuasive communication while high and low event pressed subjects will contrast the message. Although the latitude predictions serve as indicants of assimilation-contrast behaviors, significant movements of the most acceptable position also signal assimilation or contrast behaviors.

Finally, although it may seem obvious from the preceding hypotheses, it is expected that high and low event pressed subjects will not differ in their reaction to the high press message. To that extent we hypothesize:

H_5: When presented with a high press persuasive communication, subjects experiencing high amounts of event press, and subjects experiencing low amounts of event press, will not differ significantly in changes:
a. in their most acceptable position.
b. in their latitudes of rejection.
c. in their latitudes of acceptance.
d. in their latitudes of noncommitment.

Method

Subjects were sixty students enrolled in the basic speech course at the University of Southern California. This selection follows random selection from a larger original sample (A Million Random Digits. . ., 1955), of 122 (before pretest-posttest attrition).

The initial phase of the research consisted of the construction of pretest booklets to be completed by subjects. Introducing the questionnaire as part of a "survey to find out how students at USC feel about serveral important topics and concepts," subjects were asked to give their attitudes toward several "filler" topics and the target topic, "excluding freshmen and sophomores from USC." Using the Diab (1967) modification of the semantic differential, subjects evaluated the topic on four, evaluatively loaded semantic differential-type scales (good/bad; positive/negative; wise/foolish; fair/unfair) which had been factor analyzed (Nie, et.al., 1970) for the same population in previous research (Reinard & Bridges, 1972).[2] Subjects were asked to designate those positions which they found to be most acceptable, acceptable, unacceptable, and those which were neither acceptable or unacceptable. The most favorable position was scored as seven while the most unfavorable position was scored as one; the maximum possible positive score was 28; the maximum negative score was four. Latitudes of acceptance, rejection, and noncommitment were measured by a tally of frequencies:the potential range on any one lattitude was from zero to 24.

At this point subjects also completed the environmental stability scale, previously described. For purposes of later analysis, data from the environmental stability scale was recorded twice. First, each individual was assigned a total score by summing the values of the items he had checked as having occurred to them sometime in their lives. Second, scores were tallied only for those items which the individual checked as having occurred to him during the last twelve months. The former was nominally labeled "ESS scores," while the latter was termed, "previous year's ESS score."

Following the pretest, subjects were divided into four groups. The first group, randomly selected (A Million Random Digits. . ., 1955) from the total sample, formed the control group of fifteen subjects.[3] The remaining subjects were divided into thirds based upon the ESS scores: high event press, (Ss who scored higher than 1000 on the total ESS); moderate event press (Ss who scored from 721 to 999 points on the total ESS); low event press (Ss who scored less than 720 points on the ESS).[4] The extreme fifteen from the high and low groups, together with the middle fifteen from the moderate group served as subjects for the experimental groups. Similar procedures were followed for construction of experimental groups using "last year's ESS scores:" following the distribution of scores, groups were divided into a high (last year's ESS above 800),

moderate (last year's ESS score from 300 to 799), and low (last year's ESS below 300), and the extreme fifteen subjects from the high and low conditions and middle fifteen from the moderate conditions were selected for sampling.

The pretest results had demonstrated the topic to be a high press message topic. The mean of all pretest scores revealed most acceptable positons to be 6.783, and lattitudes of rejection (presumed by many to be the most reliable single indicant of involvement, Sereno, et. al., 1972; Scott, 1973) of 15.683, which may be rounded to sixteen, the recognized criterion of extreme ego involvement (Sereno & Mortensen, 1969; Mortensen & Sereno, 1970).[5] Since the topic appeared to be one on which subjects were commited and involved, any challenge to this position would, of necessity, be a high press message, challenging a large number of salient relationships. A message was designed advocating exclusion of freshmen and sophomores from USC. The message was a report from a (fictitious) chairman of the (fictitious) Undergraduate Instruction Panel of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on the USC "New Directions for the Urban University of the '70's committee. This fictitious source was rated as highly credible by students in a previously mentioned pilot session.[6] The message reported a recommendation that only upper division students be admitted to the University, "except for students receiving scholarships for outstanding academic or athletic excellence," and followed with a rationale for the move. To make the recommendation seem all the more realistic, the report was addressed to Department chairman and deans, was printed on official looking USC Memo stationary, and included brief instructions for obtaining the complete report from which the memo was abstracted. (See Appendix III)

Two weeks after the pretest administration, subjects in the experimental condition were induced to read the experimental message and a page of instructions for using the scales also a complete attitude scales (identical to the previous scales.) Subjects were told that their opinions were required to complete the second phase of the survey of student opinions. Following completion of the attitude scales, on the target filler topics, subjects were asked to use a space provided in the questionnaire to give the reasons why they felt the way they did about the target topic. This served as a check on the believability of the message stimulus. Of those sampled (to the surprise of the researchers) not one person suggested that the message or the committee was fictitious. Many made insulting remarks about the University while others expressed resignation to a woeful fate, but none indicated that they suspected that the message was for experimental purposes only.

Subjects in the control groups completed the posttest attitude scales without first reading the experimental message or writing out their reactions to it. Pretest scores were subtracted from posttest scores and the changed scores were analyzed statistically.

Analysis of Data

In order to test the research hypotheses mentioned, one way analyses of variance was computed for each of the attitude dimensions within the experimental group, and the control group. Following a significant F, eta squared (η^2) was computed (Glass & Stanley, 1970, pp. 150-151) to determine the proposition of variance accounted for by a knowledge of the variation of the independent variable.

Following a significant F between groups, Tukey's HSD (Kirk, 1968, pp. 88-90) was employed to determine the locus of differences. Comparison of experimental groups with the control group was accomplished by use of Dunnett's test (Kirk, 1968, pp. 94-95). Alpha was set at .05 for all statistical tests.

Results

Table I reports the pre- and posttest means and ANOVA for the most acceptable position changes by experimental groups. The data tended to support the first hypothesis that moderate event pressed subjects will change their most acceptable position more than the high and low pressed groups, and that these groups were not significantly different from one another. This finding must be tempered by the fact that Dunnett's comparison with the control group change scores (see Table II) revealed that only the high press condition differed significantly from the control group condition. All means, however, were in the predicted direction.

Results testing differences on the latitude of rejection are reported on Table III. Despite movement in the hypothesized direction, no significant differences were observed. Thus, hypothesis two was not confirmed. Comparison of experimental groups with the control group revealed that only low event press subjects differed significantly from control group subjects (see Table IV).

Findings regarding differences in the latitude of acceptance are summarized on Table V. Again, despite movement in the predicted direction, no significant differences were found among experimental groups. Comparison of experimental groups with the control group revealed that only low event press subjects differed significantly from control group subjects (see Table VI). Hypothesis three could not be confirmed.

Results related to differences in the latitude of noncommitment are found on Table VII. Once more, the research hypothesis could not be confirmed since no significant differences were found. Comparison with the control group (see Table VIII) revealed that only the high event press subjects differed significantly from the control group due to an otherwise insignificant rec ction in their lattitudes of noncommitment.

From all the research reported there was support for hypothesis five, since no significant differences between high and low event pressed subjects on the most acceptable position dimension and ANOVAs produced insignificant F's on the latitudes.

Analysis of results dealing with "last year's ESS score" produced no significant ANOVAs. With such unusual results, it is difficult to report such findings as confirmatory even of hypothesis five (see Tables IX-XVI). With the lack of any significant differences on any dimension, the researchers are investigating the liklihood that the entire design was contaminated with other factors. With additional pilot study, improvments in methods employed, and subsequent subject interviews, it is expected that alternate causes of this unusual behavior will become manifested more clearly, and a better understanding of the impact of environmental press ultimately will be gained.

Discussion

Although it may well be granted that changes in the most acceptable position serve as the best indicator of assimilation behavior, the uncontrolled variance of consequent press, and the quixotic behavior observed when comparisons were drawn between control and experimental groups, can hardly provide unequivocal support for any of the hypotheses. It seems, however, that the use of the message on exclusion of freshmen and sophomores from the university may be a useful operationalization of a high press message. The problem involved in putting together comparable moderate and low press messages is a difficult task which the researchers are now investigating.

Some support for the first hypothesis could be gleaned from this research, but only to support the conclusion that the hypothesis should be retained for the formal study to follow. Additional support for the last hypothesis may be found here, but such support only serves to support the intuitive prediction that subjects who are at either extreme of event press will probably not respond favorably to a high press message; a hypothesis which awaits support from investigation beyond this preliminary pilot inquiry.

In short, this research, although somewhat supportive of expectations derived from the theory, neither proves nor disproves any portion of the theory. It merely serves as a guide to the researchers in problems to be overcome before the formal research on the theory may be begun. The next stage in our program of research on this theory involves pilot testing other topics and methods to manipulate consequent and message press. Following that, substantive research on this theory will be initiated.

SUMMARY

This paper has attempted to sketch the constructs, foci, predictions, and explanatory shell of Strain Toward Stability Theory. Following on the footsteps of the statement of the theory, the development of an instrument to estimate the extent of event press was briefly noted. Finally, as a matter of interest, not proof, the researchers reported on a preliminary pilot experiment which made use of the environmental stability scale.

NOTES

[1]An experimental message on "tax incentives for small family size" proved to be an unacceptable message when control group results revealed that subjects in the sample were extremely favorably disposed toward that topic from the outset of the research. Since seven-point semantic differential-type scales were used, there was little room left for subjects to change to even more favorable attitudes toward the topic.

[2]VARIMAX orthogonal rotation produced one evaluative factor with item loadings all above .80. Eigenvalue was set at one.

[3]When conditions were broken down according to high, moderate, and low "total ESS score," and high, moderate, and low "last year's ESS score," no significant (alpha: .05) F ratios were found, despite the fact that the analyses deliberately increased the probability of a Type I error, since those groups with larger n's also tended to possess smaller variances than groups with larger n's. The single exception to this pattern was lattitude of noncommitment data for groups broken-down by "last year's ESS score." This pattern of relationship (the largest sample group also possessing the largest variance) reduces the probability of commiting a Type I error below alpha. In this circumstance, however, even setting alpha as high as .25, the F ratio did not approach significance. The rules for such decisions regarding interpretation of ANOVAs with unequal n's and variances, were made according to the rules provided by Glass and Stanley (1970, p. 372). The overall effect of the procedures followed was to maximize the potential of finding significant differences among the levels comprising the control groups. The fact that even such extensive measures could not produce significant differences provided support for combining the subgroups into single control groups of fifteen subjects.

[4]In computer data decks, total ESS scores were rounded to two places. This resulted in the equivalent of dividing each ESS item mean by ten.

[5]Pretest mean scores across all subjects for the lat itude of acceptance was 6.7. Prettest means across all subjects for the lat .tude of noncommitment was 4.665.

[6]Using McCroskey's scales (1966) any chairman of a special task force was considered highly credible. Character: 29.346 (within the absolute limits of scale interval five on a seven-point scale); Authoritativeness: 33.706 (within the absolute limits of scale interval six on a seven-point scale).

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TABLE I

Analysis of Experimental Groups' MA Changes
with "Total ESS" As a Base

ESS GROUP	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
LOW	7.6	6.07	1.53	1.08	.30
MOD	12.8	6.53	6.27	3.04	.01
HIGH	7.6	8.47	-.87	.45	.66

ANOVA				
SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	2	197.62	3.94	.05
Within	42	50.2		

TUKEY TEST

Relation of Means	difference	P
MOD > LOW	4.74	.05
MOD > HIGH	7.14	.05
LOW > HIGH	2.4	n.s.

Critical Value: 3.63

ETA SQUARED= .158

TABLE II

Analysis of Control Group MA Changes
with "Total ESS" as a Base

POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
9.87	6.07	3.8	1.19	.25

ANOVA WITH EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS				
SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	3	123.69	1.23	n.s.
Within	56	100.37		

DUNNETT TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Control > Low	2.27	n.s.
Mod > Control	2.47	n.s.
Control > High	4.67	.05

CRITICAL VALUE: 3.39

TABLE III

Analysis of Experimental Groups' Lattitude
of Rejection Changes with
"Total DSS" as a Base

DSS GROUP	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
LOW	12.27	14.6	-2.33	1.12	.28
MOD	10.27	16	-5.73	2.02	.06
HIGH	16.4	15.27	1.13	.75	.47

ANOVA

Source	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	2	176.82	2.4	n.s.
Within	42	73.71		

TUKEY TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Low > Mod	3.4	n.s.
High > Mod	6.86	.05
High > Low	3.46	

Critical Value: 4.4

ETA SQUARED: .103

TABLE IV

Analysis of Control Group Lattitude
of Rejection Changes with
"Total DSS" As a Base

POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
15.8	16.87	-.107	.31	.76

ANOVA WITH EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	3	123.7	1.23	n.s.
Within	56	100.37		

DUNNETT TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Control > Low	1.26	n.s.
Mod > Control	4.66	.05
High > Control	2.2	n.s.

Critical Value: 3.9

TABLE V

Analysis of Experimental Groups' Latitude
of Acceptance Changes
with "Total DSS" As a Base

DSS GROUP	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
Low	7.6	8.73	-1.13	.87	.40
Mod	7.4	6.8	.6	.41	.69
High	5.3	4.8	.53	.49	.64

TUKEY TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Mod > Low	1.73	n.s.
Mod > High	.07	n.s.
High > Low	1.66	n.s.

Critical Value: 2.56

ANOVA

Source	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	2	14.47	.58	n.s.
Within	42	28.98		

ETA SQUARED: .03

TABLE VI

Analysis of Control Groups' Latitude
of Acceptance Changes
with "Total DSS" As a Base

POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
7.33	6.47	.86	.61	.55

ANOVA WITH EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

Source	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	3	12.46	.47	n.s.
Within	56	26.3		

DUNNETT TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Control > Low	2	.05
Control > Mod	.27	n.s.
Control > High	.34	n.s.

Critical Value: 1.99

TABLE VII

Analysis of Experimental Groups' Latitude
of Noncommitment Changes
with "Total SSS" As a Base

SSS GROUP	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
Low	7.27	3.6	3.67	2.04	.06
Mod	8.53	4.6	3.93	1.59	.13
High	5.27	6.93	-1.66	1.52	.15

ANOVA

Source	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	2	149.69	2.84	n.s.
Within	42	52.66		

TUKEY TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Mod > Low	1.4	n.s.
Mod > High	1.66	.05
Low > High	3.94	.05

Critical Value: 3.72

ETA SQUARED: .12

TABLE VIII

Analysis of Control Groups' Latitude
of Noncommitment Change
with "Total SSS" As a Base

POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
5.8	3.53	2.27	1.3	.22

ANOVA WITH EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

Source	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	3	100.11	1.97	n.s
Within	56	50.9		

DUNNETT TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Low ≯ Control	1.4	n.s.
Mod ≯ Control	1.66	n.s.
Control > High	3.94	.05

Critical Value: 2.77

TABLE IX

Analysis of Experimental Groups' MA Changes
with "Last Year ESS" As a Base

ESS GROUP	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
Low	6.53	5.53	1	.86	.40
Mod	11.4	5.2	6.2	3.44	.004
High	8.2	5.07	3.13	1.39	.19

ANOVA				
SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	2	102.5	2.12	n.s.
Within	42	48.29		

TUKEY TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Mod > Low	5.2	.05
Mod > High	3.07	n.s.
High > Low	2.13	n.s.
Critical Value:	3.56	

ETA SQUARED: .09

TABLE X

Analysis of Control Group MA Changes
with "Last Year ESS" As a Base

POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
9.87	6.4	3.47	1.07	.3

ANOVA WITH EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS				
SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	3	68.33	.9	n.s.
Within	56	75.64		

DUNNETT TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Control > Low	2.47	n.s.
Mod > Control	2.73	n.s.
Control > High	.34	n.s.
Critical Value:	3.39	

TABLE XI

Analysis of Experimental Groups' Latitude
of Rejection Changes
with "Last Year DSS" As a Base

DSS GROUP	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
Low	13.4	14.2	-.8	.35	.73
Mod	14.33	14.47	-.14	.06	.96
High	18.2	19.27	-1.07	.85	.41

TUKEY TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Mod > Low	.66	
Mod > High	.93	
Low > High	.27	

Critical Value: 4.07

ANOVA

SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	2	3.47	.06	n.s.
Within	42	62.93		

ETA SQUARED: .003

TABLE XII

Analysis of Control Group Latitude
of Rejection Changes
with "Last Year DSS" As a Base

POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
15.13	16.07	.94	.27	.79

ANOVA WITH EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	3	2.58	.03	n.s.
Within	56	92.29		

DUNNETT TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Low > Control	.13	n.s.
Mod > Control	.8	n.s.
Control > High	.14	n.s.

Critical Value: 4.31

TABLE XIII

Analysis of Experimental Groups' Latitude
of Acceptance Changes
with "Last Year ESS" As a Base

ESS GROUP	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
Low	7.6	8.33	-.73	.55	.59
Mod	5.6	5.73	-.13	.14	.89
High	4.67	4.27	.4	.43	.68

TUKEY TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Mod > Low	.6	n.s.
High > Mod	.53	n.s.
High > Low	1.13	n.s.

Critical Value: 2.16

ANOVA

SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	2	4.82	.27	n.s.
Within	42	17.77		

ETA SQUARED: .013

TABLE XIV

Analysis of Control Group Latitude
of Acceptance Changes
with "Last Year ESS" As a Base

POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
7.73	7	.73	.52	.61

ANOVA WITH EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	3	6.18	.3	n.s.
Within	56	20.88		

DUNNETT TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Control > Low	1.46	n.s.
Control > Mod	.86	n.s.
Control > high	1.13	n.s.

Critical Value: 1.78

TABLE XV

Analysis of Experimental Groups' latitude
of Noncommitment Changes
with "Last Year DSS" As a Base

DSS GROUP	POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
Low	6.13	4.4	1.73	.74	.47
Mod	7.07	7.07	0.0	.0	1.0
High	4.13	3.4	.73	.64	.53

ANOVA

SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	2	11.36	.17	n.s.
Within	42	67.19		

TUKEY TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Low > Mod	1.73	n.s.
High > Mod	.73	n.s.
Low > High	1.0	n.s.

Critical Value: 4.2

ETA SQUARED: .008

TABLE XVI

Analysis of Control Group Latitude
of Noncommitment Changes
with "Last Year DSS" As a Base

POST-TEST	PRE-TEST	CHANGE	t	TWO-TAILED P
6.07	3.8	2.27	1.30	.215

ANOVA WITH EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

SOURCE	d.f.	MS	F	P
Between	3	15.39	.25	n.s.
Within	56	61.8		

DUNNETT TEST

Relation of Means	Difference	P
Control > Low	.54	n.s.
Control > Mod	2.27	n.s.
Control > High	1.54	n.s.

Critical Value: 3.06

APPENDIX I

LIFE CHANGE SCALE INSTRUCTIONS

PURPOSE: We need your help in constructing a measure to indicate how different "life events," such as getting married and graduating from high school, differ in their ability to change people's lives, regardless of the desirability of the events. On the following pages you will find a list of typical life experiences. Opposite each you will find space for you to assign a number indicating the significance of the event in regard to the intensity and amount of adjustment required in one's life in order to adapt to such an experience. We want you to base your judgments on how you feel about your own life experiences and your judgments about what such events mean to others in your age group.

CONCEPTUAL FOCUS: We want you to provide a number indicating the relative "change power" or amount of adjustment required as a result of each and every event on the following pages, whether or not you have had personal experience with the event. *DO NOT OMIT ANY EVENT.*

METHOD: On the following pages you will see events presented as follows:

	value	to me	last twelve months
Graduated from high school	50		
Death of a parent	200		

In reporting your judgments keep the following guidelines in mind:

(1) Assume that graduating from high school causes you to make an average of 50 units of adjustment in your daily activities, beliefs, and social relationships.

(2) Assume that the death of a parent causes you to make adjustments to your environment equal to an average value of 200 units.

(3) With these events as a starting point, assess all remaining events proportionately larger, smaller, or the same, depending on how intense and protracted the readjustments would be.

(4) In the column marked "values" write in the numerical value you have assigned to each event.

(5) If the event happened to you, place a check-mark in the column marked "to me."

(6) If the event happened to you in the last twelve months, place a check-mark in the column marked "last twelve months."

ALL RESPONSES WILL BE HELD STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL AND USED FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES ONLY.

APPENDIX II

ENVIRONMENTAL STABILITY SCALE

Item	Mean Value	S.E.	Last Twelve Months Mean
Death of a parent	200	--	200
Marriage	174	4.03	174
Divorce	165	4.29	165
Marital separation from mate	164	4.39	164
Divorce of parents	156	3.65	156
Death of a close friend	150	3.69	150
Pregnancy	149	4.23	149
Girlfriend suspected she was pregnant (male only)	140	5.26	140
Death of close family member other than parent	139	3.77	139
Abortion	139	4.51	139
Suspected you were pregnant (female only)	138	6.89	138
Drafted	134	4.25	134
Major personal injury or illness	128	3.85	128
Major change in financial status (much better or worse)	123	3.97	123
Contracting a social disease (syphilis, gonorrhea, crabs)	114	3.96	114
Use of a powerful hallucinogenic drug	110	4.65	110
Major changes in the health or behavior of a family member	107	3.64	107
Pre-marital sexual experience	107	3.88	107
Failed a course	105	3.56	105
Sexual difficulties	105	3.74	105
Fired from work	99	3.79	99
Major change in religious belief(changing theologic beliefs and practices)	99	4.39	99
Beginning college	98	3.21	98
Changing to a different line of work	95	3.4	95
Outstanding personal achievement	95	3.57	95
Traveled abroad	94	3.83	94
Volunteered for military service	93	3.76	93
Major change in social activities([illegible] dating)	87	3.33	87
Been hospitalized	84	3.09	84
Taking out a major loan(education, auto, personal)	84	3.42	84
Major argument with parents	84	3.55	84
Major argument with girlfriend or boyfriend	83	3.55	83
Been robbed	81	3.42	81
Detention in jail or other institution	81	4.16	60
Worked in an unsuccessful political campaign	80	2.86	80
Changing major	77	3.84	77
Purchased a new or different car	74	3.3	74
Major change in usual type or amount of recreation	73	3.07	73
Loss of a pet	73	3.56	73
Experienced a major natural disaster(earthquake, flood)	70	3.94	83
Major change in working hours or conditions	69	3.06	69
Smoking marijuana for the first time	68	3.71	68
Revision of personal habits(dress, manners, associations)	66	3.17	66
Hitchhiked a large distance	64	3.16	64
Major changes in the number of family get-togethers	63	3.09	63
Major changes in eating habits(different hours or amounts)	61	2.94	61
Participated in a social protest	60	2.69	60
Worked in a successful political campaign	58	2.84	58
Graduated from high school	50	--	50
Minor violations of the law(traffic tickets, jay-walking, disturbing the peace, etc.)	44	2.6	44

APPENDIX III

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Campus Memo

To: Department Chairmen and Deans DATE: For immediate release

FROM: Dr. A.J. Trent, Chairman, Blue-Ribbon Task Force SUBJECT: Task Force Recommendations

Twelve of the fifteen members on the Undergraduate Instruction Panel of the Blue-Ribbon Task Force on the USC New Directions for the Urban University in the '70s committee endorsed the general conclusion reported below. Our purpose here is to inform you of the primary recommendation and the rationale behind it. Actual implementation of such a policy, of course, is a task for the full Academic Senate and University Trustees. The complete report is available in Dr. Trent's office.

Recommendation

ADMISSION TO USC SHOULD BE RESTRICTED TO PERSONS HOLDING AN ASSOCIATE OF ARTS DEGREE OR ITS EQUIVALENT FROM AN ACCREDITED COMMUNITY COLLEGE OR UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION. EXCEPTIONS SHOULD NOT BE MADE EXCEPT FOR STUDENTS RECEIVING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC OR ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE.

Rationale

Experience at other institutions such as Governor's State University in Illinois, demonstrates that urban universities focused upon upper division and graduate-level instruction accrue several concrete advantages:

1. Administrative costs tend to decrease as a result of a more stable student population's reduced demand for add-drop, change of major, grade review procedures, and disciplinary staff.
2. Since other undergraduate institutions would provide the filtering process of determining which students are suited to academic life, there would be a marked decrease in the rate of attrition (which now stands at forty-five percent at USC).
3. A smaller and academically more mature undergraduate population would promote a closer student-teacher relationship in proseminar-type classes and, therefore, enhance the intellectual growth of both students and instructors.

Prestige comes to a university as a result of the research and publishing efforts of its faculty. The freshman-sophomore population not only strains the time and intellectual resources of the faculty, but also demands survey courses which are not amenable to productive student-instructor interactions. This results in a two-way drain on the University's teaching capabilities.

1. At present, graduate students are supported with teaching assistantship positions (awarded on the basis of need and research potential, not necessarily teaching ability) which are funded directly by the University. Removing the necessity for teaching assistantships by adopting the recommendation would allow needy graduate students to serve as research assistants. This would result in the bulk of their stipends being paid by business and government research grant revenues, instead of University resources.
2. Freeing the senior faculty from the demands of lower division instruction would result in an increased capability for faculty and graduate student personnel to generate and seek new governmental and business research grants for major projects.

The adoption of this recommendation would serve the interests of the student:

1. Adoption would save the average student approximately $3,000 annually in tuition and housing expenses.
2. It would improve the quality of instruction for most students. At present, the quality and consistency of instruction provided by teaching assistants is often uncertain. Many teaching assistants are inexperienced teachers and occasionally teach outside their major areas of concentration. With the need for teaching assistants removed, students would be assured of education provided by instructors competent and trained to teach in their areas of expertise.
2. In the past decade the role of the university and community college has changed in function, each becoming more specialized. Two-year institutions are particularly well qualified to provide optimal educational programs for freshmen and sophomores. Such institutions have counselling and instructional staff devoted to maximizing the intellectual capabilities of lower division college students. On the other hand, the university has the primary role of providing advanced educational opportunities which cannot be obtained elsewhere. The Task Force feels that USC should not attempt to step outside its specialty and compete with community college education of lower division students.